

## **The governmentality and accountability of UK national museums and art galleries**

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### **Abstract**

This study furthers our understanding of the role of governmentality mechanisms in relation to other-forming and self-forming accounts of art organisations, by using empirical data collected from interviews with senior managers of UK national museums and art galleries (MAGs) and from secondary published sources. The findings highlight how governmentality mechanisms had power-effects through the creation of knowledge about MAGs and the resistance strategies of MAGs. Whilst the governmentality mechanisms were expected to ensure the automatic functioning of disciplinary power, in some instances the government directly intervened to over-ride decisions taken by senior managers when these conflicted with political imperatives.

**Keywords:** Governmentality; accountability; performance; UK; museums; art galleries; public sector

*What does it mean to govern a ship? It means clearly to take charge of the sailors, but also of the boat and its cargo; to take care of a ship means also to reckon with winds, rocks, and storms; and it consists in that activity of establishing a relation between the sailors, who are to be taken care of, and the ship, which is to be taken care of, and the cargo, which is to be brought safely to port, and all those eventualities like winds, rocks, storms, and so on. This is what characterizes the government of a ship (Foucault, 1994, p. 209).*

## **1. Introduction**

Foucault (2007, p. 108) defines the concept of governmentality as “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power...that we all call “government” and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (*savoirs*)”.

Governmentality not only disciplines and subjugates subjects through procedures, calculations, tactics, and strategies (i.e. apparatuses of power) but also treats them as objects through the different modes of objectivation (Foucault, 1984). Townley (1993) argues that governmentality mechanisms create a body knowledge to objectify those on whom they are applied, and turn subjects located in the governmentality discourse into an object of knowledge. Understanding the modes of ‘subjectivation’ and ‘objectivation’ of subjects in practice requires an analysis of power-relations, and the techniques used in different institutional contexts to act upon behaviour to shape, direct, and modify conduct (Foucault, 1984). Whilst governmentality processes are aimed at forming and reforming subjects into docile bodies, they also make subjects observe and analyse their own conduct (ibid.).

This study attempts to further our understanding of the other-forming and self-forming accounts of UK national museums and art galleries (MAGs) by using a governmentality theoretical lens. It is based on empirical data collected from interviews with senior officials involved in the governance of MAGs and secondary data from the annual reports of MAGs, government publications, and press releases. It makes a theoretical contribution and an empirical contribution to the literature as follows. First, prior studies have used a governmentality theoretical lens to examine the government of others (Spence & Rinaldi, 2014) or government of selves (Manochin, Brignall, Lowe, & Howell, 2011) in specific empirical settings. This study makes a theoretical contribution by analysing how governmentality processes ‘subjectivates’ and ‘objectivates’ subjects to make them answerable both to others and to themselves. It illustrates how governmentality mechanisms created knowledge about MAGs, and the power-effects of governmentality mechanisms. Second, whilst prior studies have examined issues related to the governance, accountability and financial reporting of art organisations in specific countries (Caldwell, 2002; Carnegie & Wolnizer, 1996; Ellwood & Greenwood, 2016; Lindqvist, 2007; Oakes & Oakes, 2016), this study makes an empirical contribution through its focus on UK national MAGs which are unique in terms of their funding structure and political accountability.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The next section explains the governmentality theoretical framework and its key constructs of power, knowledge and subjectivation. Section 3 explains the methods used to collect data for the purpose of this study. Section 4 presents the findings by discussing the governmentality of MAGs (i.e. the ensemble formed by institutions, processes, analyses, calculations and tactics) and highlighting some of the pressures and resistance in governmentality processes. The last section concludes this paper.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Governmentality: Power, knowledge and subjectivation

Power, knowledge and subjectivation of subjects are perhaps three of the most significant themes in Foucault's extensive examination of practices such as psychiatry, clinical medicine, penalty and sexuality (Foucault, 1965, 1973, 1977, 1978). Power and knowledge are coterminous and integral to classifying, categorising and controlling subjects, as stated by Foucault (1980, p. 52):

*The exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information...the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.*

Power is embedded in hegemonic social, economic, and cultural systems. It comes into play in social systems comprising of families, companies and institutions and are sustained and changed overtime through confrontations (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 1982). According to Foucault (1978, p. 94), "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away". Instead power is diffused, relational and it becomes apparent when exercised. Power and control encapsulate interests and are directed to shape values. Whilst they can be visible and coercive, they are most effective when executed subtly in organisational hierarchies through the creation and use of knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

Institutions, processes, analyses, calculations and tactics give power its effects and attempt to render subjects knowable, visible and calculable. As pointed out by Rose (1991) governmentality technologies "have an unmistakable power... in the same process in which numbers achieve a privileged status in political decisions, they simultaneously promise a "de-politicization" of politics, redrawing the boundaries between politics and objectivity by purporting to act as automatic technical mechanisms for making judgements, prioritizing problems and allocating scarce resources" (pp.673-674). However, Rose and Miller (1992) argue that the apparatuses of governing, which "include the imposition of law; the activities of state functionaries or publicly controlled bureaucracies; surveillance and discipline by an all seeing police" may not be very effective at achieving objectives, because governmentality technologies are primarily concerned with enabling governments achieve action at a distance as opposed to providing freedom to managers to self-govern.

For governmentality mechanisms to have power-effects, Foucault (1977) asserts that subjects must be framed in an enclosure or a space to enable the assignment of responsibilities, and ranked or evaluated for performance (Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2013; Townley 1993). Foucault has extensively discussed the governmentality mechanisms that enable the government of others and self in his work on prison (1977), psychiatry (1965) and medicine (1973). Physical or virtual enclosures define organisational boundaries and enable the institutionalisation of governmentality mechanisms (e.g. calculative practices, panopticon, and rules and regulations). Within organisational boundaries individuals are further partitioned in spaces for the assignment of responsibilities. For example, job descriptions often form the basis for performance appraisal and evaluation. Performance measurements, ranking (such as in league tables), examinations (such as testing and auditing) and public judgements not only enable principals evaluate the performance of their subjects, but also enable subjects evaluate their own performance.

Power is purposive. According to Foucault (1978, p. 94-95), "power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective...there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives". Governmentality mechanisms are institutionalized, and are a dominant form of rationality used to justify the pursuit of policy objectives. Rationalisation have two main dimensions: a reasoned justification (or communicative action) and a strategic instrumental

action (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Whilst governmentality mechanisms enable emancipation from established ways of doing things and provide managers with the tool to justify a particular decision, organisational effectiveness may be undermined by conducting subjects through the use of instrumental or purposive means-ends rational governmentality mechanisms (Townley 2008; Townley, Cooper, & Oakes, 2003; Weber, 1978).

Inevitably, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Resistance is plural and inscribed everywhere in the network of power. For governmentality mechanisms to effectively direct subjects towards purposive objectives and avoid resistance, objectives should be internalised by subjects. Otherwise, they may result in symbolic violence to subjects if the latter are forced to deliver objectives they do not necessarily agree with (Messner, 2009; Shearer, 2002). As pointed by Townley, et al. (2003, p. 1067) resistance arises “when there is a growing disarticulation between a discourse operating as communicative rationalisation, but being operationalised through mechanisms that predominantly reflect dimensions of an instrumental rationalization”. Whilst resistance may be mitigated through communication with subjects to gain their approval and support, the instrumental implementation of governmentality technologies to direct behaviour towards purposeful objectives may destabilise relationships.

The generation of knowledge about a subject to judge and evaluate not only creates discipline, but also has normalising consequences. According to Foucault (1991, p. 181), “distribution according to ranks or grades has a double role; it marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes; but it also punishes and rewards”. Behaviour are internalised and norms of acceptable performance are reinforced through education, training and/or coercion mechanisms. The effect of the knowledge and power structures is that the subject (e.g. worker, madman and prisoner) becomes an object of knowledge. Disciplinary power creates norm, as stated by Foucault (1991, p.223): “disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate”.

The concept of governmentality has been widely used in the social sciences, to study governance and accountability issues in both private sector (Miller & O’Leary, 1987; Spence & Rinaldi, 2014) and public sector institutions (Ferlie, et al., 2013; Manochin, et al., 2011). For example, Manochin, et al (2011) examined how the use of a traffic lights system by a housing association provided a visual representation of performance in various areas and enabled the housing association improve accountability not only to government departments but also to themselves. Bigoni & Funnell (2015, p. 161) examined the “genealogical core of governmentality in the context of the Church at a time of great crisis in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the Roman Catholic Church was undergoing reform instituted by Pope Eugenius IV(1431–1447)”. Their study suggests that “accounting was one of the technologies that allowed the bishops to control both the diocese as a whole and each priest, to subjugate the priests to the bishops’ authority and, thereby, to govern the diocese through a never-ending extraction of truth” (Bigoni and Funnell, 2015, p. 160).

## ***2.2 Governance and accountability issues in MAGs***

Prior studies focussing on the empirical context of MAGs have examined issues such as: how “a variety of practices, techniques, measures and reports” such as accruals accounting, budgetary control processes, performance measures, and cash flows and financial reports “enhance the accountability of museum managers”? (Carnegie & Wolnizer, 1996, pp. 84-90; Christiansen & Skærbæk, 1997); the effects of public sector reforms on public governance and management of art organisations (Lindqvist, 2007, 2012); ‘the role of calculative practices’ in reconciling conflicting cultural and managerial values and guiding parties towards census and productive actions (Mikes & Morhart, 2016; Tlili, 2014); the importance and usefulness of

technological “knowledge of how to do things, how to accomplish goals...in such areas as administration and communication, marketing and product” (Rentschler & Potter, 1996, p. 101); and, the pedagogical “role of language and power” in business plans as a mechanism to direct and control art organisations (Oakes, Townley, & Cooper, 1998, p. 257).

Oakes, et al. (1998) use a Bourdieusian theoretical lens to examine the role of language and power in controlling museums and cultural heritage sites in Alberta, Canada. They found that central government demonstrated their power over museums and heritage sites “directly, by requiring business plans, and indirectly, by rejecting plans that did not fit an unspecified version of the correct, implicit template” (p. 284). This resulted in symbolic violence as the dominant control discourses of the government displaced other forms of expression by the managers of museums and heritage sites (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, Darbel, & Schnapper, 1991).

Prior studies have suggested that to survive in the increasingly complex and changing environment, MAGs have to embrace governance reforms, such the adoption of new management techniques, and using technology (Lindqvist, 2007, 2012; Rentschler & Potter, 1996). Similarly, Carnegie and Wolnizer (1996, p.85) state that, as a centre for “preservation, conservation, presentation, investigation and public enjoyment of the world’s collections and cultural values”, MAGs should be innovative, utilise digital technologies and information, and compete at the international level to ensure their long-term survival. In the context of the USA, Christensen & Mohr (2003, p. 155) argue that MAGs are primarily accountable to their funders who need accountability information “to make resource allocation decisions and assess how well managers are utilising their contributions”. In the context of Italy, Ferri & Zan (2014) found that MAGs have adopted new management accounting techniques to meet the accountability demands from government, non-government sponsors and private/individual donors (Zan, 2002).

Whilst governance reforms are aimed at improving the accountabilities of MAGs, they may have unintended consequences and result in resistance. For example, Oakes and Oakes (2016) found that regional art organisations in the UK strategically mitigated the impact of accounting colonisation by transforming accounting through a range of narratives and visual reporting methods. Ellwood and Greenwood (2016) argue that measuring value of heritage assets, though not killing the cat, can lead to a change in the perceived cultural value of the assets. Lindqvist (2007) found that the fragmentation of responsibility among managers due to increasing accountability demand by various stakeholder has led to an increase in costs and placed additional pressures on MAGs, especially when “financial pressure is combined with increasing demand for visible performance and compliance with political priorities” (Lindqvist, 2012, p. 23). Tlili (2014) argues that funders’ objectives can overload MAGs by pulling them in different directions, and objectives and targets can be (mis)interpreted in multiple ways. Moreover, the author questions the value of the costly accounting information that are routinely gathered by arguing that accounting information are unable to usefully and fully capture the complex activities of MAGs and may become an end in itself (Tlili, 2014).

In contrast, Mikes and Morhart (2016) illustrated how calculative practices played a catalysing role in the creation of cultural goods. They demonstrated the transformative power of calculative practices in the creation of the Charlie Chaplin museum. Accounting practices were used to reconcile the competing and conflicting objectives of multiple parties and guide them towards the development of evaluative principles to reach consensus and enable productive action.

This study contributes to the literature examining the governance and accountability of MAGs, by adopting a governmentality theoretical lens to provide insightful understanding of what is involved in rendering subjects (i.e. UK national MAGs) knowable. More specifically, through what techniques, procedures and processes a subject becomes known? How the

techniques, procedures and processes are established and operate? What effects do they have on the subject? How the subjects are rendered visible to others and themselves? A governmentality framework emphasizes the importance of understanding: the governmentality mechanisms that make knowledge of the subject possible, and the power-effects of governmentality mechanisms in a network of relationships. As pointed by Townley (1993, pp.537-538), investigating these types of questions which relate to the production of knowledge and its power-effects requires researchers attempting such an endeavour to distance themselves from a research paradigm that conceives “practices as a technicist construct”. The next section explains the research methods used to understand how governmentality mechanisms operate to render the conduct of UK national MAGs visible.

### 3. Research methods

This study focusses on understanding techniques, procedures, processes used to govern UK national MAGs and their power-effects. To achieve its objective, twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior officers from: the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), non-government sponsors and donors, and the boards of trustees and senior management teams of two national museums and two art galleries located in London. National MAGs located in London were selected primarily because of the important role these organisations play in the implementation of public policies. Secondary data were obtained from Acts of Parliament, the accounting reports of MAGs, government publications, and press releases. As critical researchers, we examined the methods of control and rendering visibility in governmentality processes, whilst recognising that governmentality processes are intertwined with ideologies and interests. Table 1 provides a summary of the data collection methods.

**Table 1: Data collection methods**

	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Position of interviewees &amp; documents analysed</b>
1.	Semi-structured interviews.	Trustees of MAGs, Chief executive officers; Finance directors; Directors of governance; Curators, Directors of public engagement; Directors of development (sixteen interviewees in total from MAGs). Private donor/sponsors (two interviewees). Senior officers from DCMS (two interviewees).
2.	Secondary data from published sources.	Acts of Parliament, accounting reports, funding agreements, key performance indicators, MAGs’ webpages, and press releases.

Each interview lasted between one hour and one and a half hour. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees and were transcribed immediately after the interview to enable accurate recall and transcription. The interviewees were informed that their names would not be revealed when writing up the findings, although their organisations may be identified from quotations and references to data from published sources.

The interviewees provided insights into the institutions, procedures, processes and tactics used to direct and control MAGs. Senior managers explained the role of the MAGs, the expectations of their stakeholders, power-relationships and resistance. More specifically, they clarified the activities of the MAGs, how MAGs are regulated, how MAGs are financed, and the (dis)agreements the MAGs have with the government and non-government funders.

Information from public sources contained different types of discourses of MAGs. According to Foucault (1972, p. 27), a discourse refers to “the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written)” and includes things that are thought, said (e.g. interviews) or written (e.g. texts) about a subject and the practices, structures, rules and norms operating in a social context. Foucault (1972) suggests that there are many ways of seeing and talking about the world and acknowledges that many discourses from various sources operate simultaneously. Acts of Parliament and funding agreements contained discourses regarding the statutory duties of trustees and their contractual agreement with the government.

Information contained in the annual reports of MAGs, press releases and webpages contained discourses regarding: their objectives and governance; their funding structure; their activities; the stakeholders to whom they are answerable to including the nature of their duties and relationships; and how they contributed towards achieving socio-economic, community and other objectives (Carnegie & West, 2005; Davison, 2007).

#### **4. Findings: The governmentality of UK museums and art galleries**

This section presents the findings by discussing the governmentality of UK national MAGs, and highlighting some of the pressures and resistance in governmentality processes.

##### ***4.1 Governmentality: institutions, processes, analyses, calculations and tactics***

Governmentality mechanisms, comprising of government and regulatory institutions, rules and regulations, performance measures, and accounting reports, were used to steer MAGs towards the achievement of objectives and to make their conduct visible. These mechanisms not only enabled MAGs to discharge accountability to others, but to themselves as well.

In the UK, specific Acts of Parliament govern the cultural, charitable and trading activities conducted by MAGs (refer to table 2). One of the interviewees pointed out that these regulatory mechanisms governing the activities of MAGs are complicated and do not intersect in a helpful way:

*Perhaps what is even more complicated is the regulatory environment. The public sector isn't the only one environment we operate in. We also operate in the charitable sector, because we are a registered charity, and therefore have a relationship with the Charity Commission. And, we also operate in the private sector, because we are also a commercial business. Those three regulatory environments intersect, and often not in a very helpful way (Director of public engagement, M1).*



**Table 2: Regulatory framework governing the activities of UK MAGs**

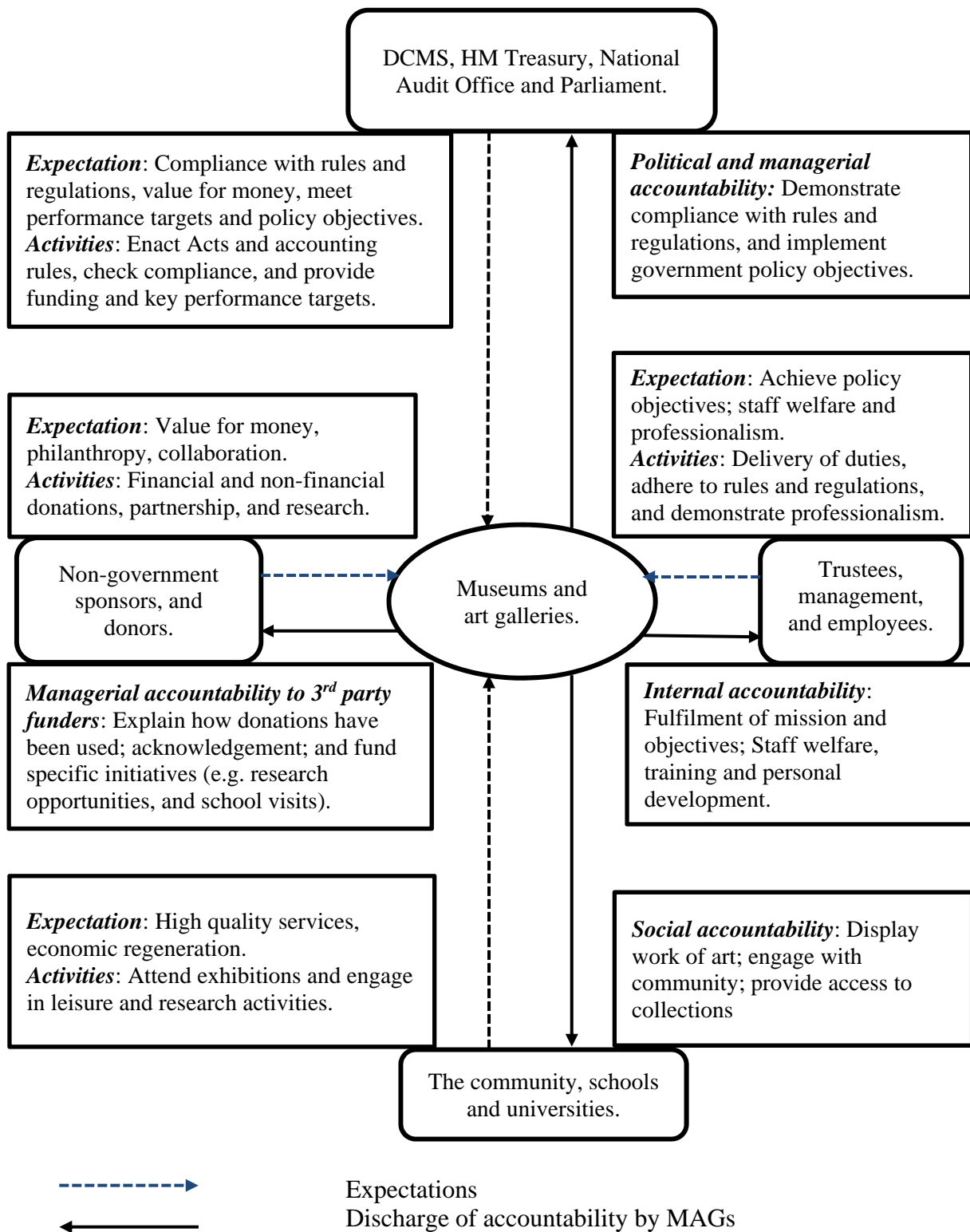
<b>Nature of activities</b>	<b>Governance of activities</b>
Cultural	Museums and Galleries Act 1992
	British Museum Act 1963
	National Heritage Act 1983
Charitable	Charities Act 2011
Trading	Companies Act 2006

Trustees of MAGs are appointed by the government to implement public policy objectives. The statutory duties of the Board of Trustees of museums and art galleries are enshrined in Section 2(1) of the Museums and Galleries Act of 1992 which states that MAGs have to: (a) “care for, preserve and add to the works of art”, (b) “secure that the works of art are exhibited to the public”, (c) “secure that the works of art and the documents are available to persons seeking to inspect them in connection with study or research”, and (d) “generally promote the public’s enjoyment and understanding of painting and other fine art both by means of the Board’s collection and by such other means as they consider appropriate”. The annual report of the National History Museum explained how the trustees are appointed as follows:

*The Museum is governed by a Board of 12 Trustees who are appointed by the Prime Minister (8), the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on recommendation by the Royal Society (1) or co-opted by the Board of Trustees themselves (3). Those appointed by the Prime Minister are appointed by open competition.*  
(National History Museum Annual Report, 2014-15, p. 3).

Whilst MAGs have to provide visibility to the government and Parliament, they are also answerable to non-government sponsors and donors, the community and employees. Figure 1 provides an overview of the expectations of these stakeholders and how MAGs discharge their accountabilities.

**Figure 1: Governmentality of UK national MAGs: Meeting accountability expectations**



MAGs are primarily funded by taxpayers' money, and in return the government requires them to provide free entry to enable the general public enjoy their collections. For example, the funding agreement between the DCMS and the Tate Gallery laid out the expectations of the government as follows:

*The grant aid allocation is dependent on Tate maintaining free admission to the permanent collections...The Secretary of State's letter expects... the world-class collections and front-line services of Tate to be protected... that free entry to the permanent collections of the national museums will continue to be available... that Tate will pursue ways to increase its self-generated income, including through private giving...Tate will undertake to comply with all relevant legislation...will supply DCMS each year with the regular financial information set out in the data collection schedule, as well as returns against 12 performance indicators supplied by DCMS (annexed)... This information, together with Annual Reports and any further reports Tate prepares in relation to progress against its own corporate priorities, will be used to monitor annual performance.*

*(DCMS, Funding agreement, 2011, pp. 1-2).*

Performance measures and accounting reports make the activities of MAGs visible to their stakeholders. For example, the DCMS obtains action at a distance by requiring MAGs to report on key performance indicators specified in a funding agreement, and to comply with rules and regulations. The funding and regulatory mechanisms have normalisation consequences in the form of reward or punishment (Foucault, 1991). Accountability is predominantly political and managerial, and flows upward from the MAGs to DCMS, HM Treasury, National Audit Office and Parliament (Hodges, 2012).

MAGs are answerable to their non-government donors and sponsors who fund specific initiatives (e.g. social inclusion, engagement with minorities, education of children, and funding of research). A director from a museum distinguished the difference between sponsorship from corporations, and trusts and foundations by stating that the relationship with corporations is governed through a strict legal contract whilst the relationship with trusts and foundations is less formal:

*With major corporate donors, there is a contract attached to it... So there are structured legal agreements. For example, we have an agreement with BP which lays out the nature of partnership with them...With trusts and foundations, sometimes there is a memorandum of agreement, containing details of the reason for the money being given. The gallery says it will direct the activity and funds towards activities the funding have been provided for. So we have different levels of agreement ranging from a strong legal contract to a purely verbal philanthropic agreement (Director of Development, AG1).*

MAGs make their conduct visible by reporting on the progress of projects and achievement of explicit or implied objectives. As stated by a director from one museum:

*You have to set up project objectives for the project and meet sponsors' priorities. They may ask for other things to be included. They monitor the project quite closely; you will need to meet them very regularly. You would have to demonstrate that you have used the fund to meet objectives, and to evaluate achievement of objectives afterwards (Director of Governance, M2).*

To obtain the agreement and support of their sponsors, help stabilise relationships, and provide greater visibility on how funds have been expended, they often invite their sponsors to work together on specific projects. As explained by the curator of one museum:

*If we are working with academics on developing an exhibition, they are brought together to work on something. Whilst with external funders, it is a continued period of keeping them informed, making them know what the money is paying for.... Quite a lot of controls are in place (Curator, M2).*

Whilst reporting mechanisms are used to justify how funds have been used, MAGs have some autonomy over decisions and courses of actions to achieve objectives. The intensity of reporting to funders depends on the nature of the project and the materiality of the funding. As stated by a director of sponsor:

*Usually we ask for an end of grant report. So the MAGs basically tell what they have done with the money. For major funding a full report is required, and for minor funding the MAGs just have to only say what the outcome of the project was. If the money is for a big building then, we would require a full report which would include a survey and compliance with building regulations, etc. We are fairly hands-off in terms of how they handle the project, but we just want to make sure they use the money appropriately. So basically they have to tell us what they spend the money on and what the outcomes were (Sponsor 1).*

However, a different sponsor (Sponsor 2) explained that it uses contractual agreement and performance based payment mechanism to normalise the behaviour of MAGs and motivate them to delivery on their promises:

*There is a contract between the museums and ourselves which have to be signed by somebody senior, usually the director or the chair. Then we have a monitoring regime beyond that. So for fairly low grant the standard monitoring regime is three reports. Not long after they start, midway and then at the end. We hold 10% back of the grant until they provide us an evaluation, so we have an evaluation report at the end. Depending on the project, we might put someone to monitor as well to report to us and to flag any problems identified. And then for a bigger project, those reports are expected every six months. So there is a process all the way through so that we can see they deliver what they promise to do (Sponsor 2).*

MAGs establish norms of acceptable behaviour and internalise them through the provision of training and development and employment contracts with their employees. For example, MAGs are required to adhere to a Code of Ethics which they incorporate in their employees' employment contract and sponsors' standard contract:

*We encourages employees to adhere to the Code of Ethics for Museums as a contractual requirement. We achieve this by including reference to upholding and promoting the Code of Ethics for Museums in job descriptions that form part of our employees' contract of employment and contract with sponsors (Trustee, AG2).*

In summary, the ensemble formed by government and regulatory institutions, procedures and processes, and calculations are used to make the conduct of MAGs visible to their stakeholders. They have the normalising effects of making MAGs deliver on their promises. However, governmentality mechanisms are universal and assume that subjects are homogenous. Partly as a result of this, there have been pressures and resistance in governmentality processes. These are discussed next.

#### **4.2 Pressures and resistance in governmentality processes**

As mentioned by Foucault (1978), where there is power, there is resistance. Governmentality technologies created discipline by steering MAGs towards achieving the objectives of their government and non-government funders. However, senior managers argued that the objectives of MAGs should be determined by senior management, and because MAGs are heterogeneous entities they should not be governed by generic key performance indicators. MAGs silently resisted government's control by providing selective visibility on their activities. For example, they prepared comprehensive reports for the board of trustees which they did not provide to DCMS. As strongly argued by a director of public engagement:

*I would argue very strongly that it is more important for us, as an institution, to decide what our strategic objectives should be based on our history, what we are trying to achieve, and what the operating environment looks like. We report to our governing body or the trustees on certain strategic objectives which we don't report to DCMS, because the DCMS's key performance indicators may or may not be relevant to what we are trying to achieve (Director of Public Engagement, M1).*

Moreover, the MAGs adapted the government's performance management system in the form of a traffic light system to monitor their own performance. A finance director explained that they use a simple traffic light system, comprising of red, orange and green colours to provide them with a visual representation of their performance in areas of importance to them:

*We have performance matrix for key objectives, which may be a cost target, or a deadline for us to meet, or to increase funds from certain sources by certain amount. We use a simple traffic light system to measure our performance. For example, if something is red, the trustees would want us to provide an explanation and what we are doing to remedy it (Finance Director, M2).*

However, the MAGs strategically resisted governmentality mechanisms by adopting a persuasive approach, as opposed to a confrontational one, because they did not want to upset their principal funder. They acknowledge that, ultimately, it is the government that has power over their decisions. For example, a director of development from a museum explained that:

*What we can do is demonstrate what will work and what won't work. If we don't agree, we just say no we don't want to get involved in that. But we have to be very careful because we are conscious that they are our funders, particularly DCMS. So it is a political battle with words about which initiative we would choose to be involved in, and which one we won't be involved in. Ultimately it is the government's decision that often prevails (Director of Development, M2).*

Whilst resistance was generally covert and subtle, there were instances when it was overt. For example, the trustees and senior managers of a MAG made the strategic decision to close one of its branches. However, this decision was over-ruled by the government (i.e. DCMS) who argued that the closure would have negative social and economic impact on the community. A trustee explained that:

*In theory we can close one of our museums, but in practice we can't because of their social and economic impact...Last year, we decided to close one of our museums in Bradford because it was not financially viable. But DCMS said no we cannot close the museum. The government imposed conditions as part of the grant-in-aid funding for us to keep the museum open (Trustee 1, M2).*

Although the government overtly demonstrated their power by over-riding senior management's decision, the latter strategically reduced their activities, downsized, and required visitors to pay for special exhibits. As stated by the trustee:

*You know when the government said we were not allowed to close our museum, we revised our plans. And we are cutting a lot of activities of the museum, we are cutting staff, we have already moved out one of our buildings and we have already outsourced some of the offerings to cut cost. So we created the plan that was much more manageable. (T2, M2).*

Senior managers from MAGs argued that they sometimes voiced their resistance when coerced into implementing the government's initiatives, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) projects. A director from a museum explained that they were not consulted and did not necessarily agree with this initiative:

*There was an initiative that came out of government about how to get new people to study STEM. I think you often wonder why the next initiative is not informed by the previous initiative. Where does the new one come from? We are used as a platform very often, either to promote that initiative or inform that initiative. It can be quite difficult because some of those initiatives we don't agree with. We know that it won't work (Director of Development, M1).*

The government's prerogative to reduce the funding of MAGs under the guise of austerity and to raise funding from non-government sources have created pressures to cut costs and obtain funding from other sources. A CEO of one museum explained that MAGs face high fixed costs which place pressure on their budget:

*Our biggest challenge is financial. Government funding has fallen by more than 25% in real terms between 2010 and now, and next year it will fall. Well, we know our funding was cut for 2015-16. So we would have to find additional funding to make up the difference or cut expenditure to reflect that. We are an organisation that has very high fixed costs. These buildings need to be maintained and the collections need to be looked after. Lots of our costs are unavoidable. Costs have gone up far faster than the rate of inflation, and yet our funding is falling (CEO, M1).*

To reduce financial dependence on the government and gain greater autonomy, MAGs are finding ways to increase funding from charitable and trading activities. As explained by a director of development:

*We want our income from non-government sources to reach 60% of total income, and to have 40% income from government. However, we don't want government grant to reduce. We just want our overall income to increase. That is, we want a growth in the proportion of our philanthropic and commercial income (Director of Development, M2).*

However, increasing the proportion of funding MAGs from non-government sources may lead to a change in power-relationships and further pressures, as non-government funders may steer MAGs in different directions. A principal curator from a museum highlighted that placing greater reliance on corporate and private sponsors may influence the culture of MAGs:

*Donors have too much restrictions; we won't really want to touch them so much. If they want to get their names on the main hall, that is fine. So we won't be driven by donors. That is why I am very concerned if the government funding goes down. We might be heavily relying on the donors, because it then affects the political drivers and culture of the museum (Curator, M1).*

MAGs were required to report on their activities and justify how they have used their funding from government and non-government sources. However, they silently resisted to the requirement to treat money they have raised from charitable and commercial sources as taxpayers' money. As argued by a CEO:

*Our trustees and I personally, are accountable for public funds, but any money that passes through the organisation has to be treated as public money. So any charitable money or any commercial income that comes to the museum, arguably isn't taxpayers' money but has to be treated as if it is (CEO, M2).*

However, in recent years MAGs successfully negotiated for financial freedom with the government. As explained by a director of finance:

*Increasingly there is some flexibility and recognition within the government that museums need to be given a certain amount of freedom. This just started in recent years. Obviously different governments have different approaches. During the last spending review, a certain number of operational freedom for museums was negotiated and secured. They are very specific but they help us have much more control now than before (DOF2, M2).*

Resistance was also apparent in the process of appointing trustees. Senior managers pointed out that MAGs should have greater control over the appointment of trustees, rather than the government. However, the Public Appointment Advisor from DCMS argued that because MAGs are mainly funded by public money, the government should appoint trustees:

*Because MAGs are funded by public money, it is right that ministers have some degree of influence on the decision-making machinery of the museum and gallery... The trustees are there on the board to ensure the director does what is necessary and are accountable to the ministers and government for their performance of that responsibility (Public Appointment Advisor, DCMS).*

In summary, MAGs operate in the space of culture and are responsible for achieving pre-defined policy objectives. In this enclosure, MAGs are further partitioned in terms of their organisational boundaries, specific location and nature of their activities (e.g. science, history and art). They are directed, appraised and ranked through various governmentality mechanisms. The governmentality mechanisms used to govern MAGs at a distance are primarily aimed at making their conduct visible to the government which provided the bulk of their funding. This study has highlighted how subjects resisted to governmentality mechanisms.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has adopted a governmentality theoretical lens to examine the institutions, processes, analyses, calculations and tactics through which MAGs are rendered visible. It has illustrated how a body of knowledge exerts disciplinary power in practice to subjectify and objectify MAGs. Governmentality mechanisms involved the deployment of multiple methods (e.g. management agreements, contracts, key performance indicators, accounting reports and appointment of trustees) to create knowledge, provide visibility and render subjects into calculable objects.

Governmentality mechanisms placed subjects in a space, partitioned them, defined responsibilities, and provided visibility to create discipline. Whilst MAGs operate in the cultural space, their roles are wide-ranging. In contemporary society, MAGs serve cultural, social and economic objectives. For example, they serve the purpose of preserving a

community's cultural memory in trust for future generations; bonding the various segments of the population together to create peace in the community; acting as agents of change by educating the population and providing citizens with an avenue for discussion and dialogue over significant matters; reaching target groups like youth, women and minority through programmes and activities; and promoting better understanding of cultural heritage and creating agenda for growth and development. In the light of their importance, the UK government funds national MAGs and use them to implement public policy objectives. The UK government has attempted to remove barriers to entry in the market for cultural capital by providing free entry to enable the wider public enjoy the exhibits of MAGs. In addition to serving the traditional role of collecting, preserving, and displaying objects and work of art, the UK government requires MAGs to work with universities, schools and the local community to foster interest in science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM), create cohesion among the population, and reach specific groups.

In the pursuit of objective ranking and rationality, MAGs were required to quantify their performance in contracts and reports. However, although MAGs were rendered visible and calculable through governmentality mechanisms, the relationship between MAGs and their stakeholders was to some extent indeterminate. Whilst the provision of knowledge is central to controlling subjects, the indeterminate relationship provided MAGs with some discretion to execute strategies to achieve objectives. However, the government showed their power by directly intervening to over-ride the rational economic decisions taken by senior managers, when these conflicted with political objectives. The dominant discourses of the government displaced the expression and decision of MAGs, resulting in resistance. Moreover, whilst governmentality mechanisms attempted to render MAGs docile, MAGs were complicit in the process of their own domination. Where they could not overtly resist governmentality mechanisms, they silently resisted.

Governmentality provides MAGs with the tools to rationalise/justify their conduct to others and themselves. Because of their focus at making MAGs answerable to the government, the governmentality technologies do not effectively enable MAGs answer to themselves and to other non-government funders. Financial independence from the government and the inability of governmentality technologies to govern the heterogeneous activities of MAGs have created tensions in the governance process. To the extent that governmentality technologies had a purposive end which were incompatible with the objectives of MAGs, they had dysfunctional consequences. Governmentality is intrinsic to governing MAGs and the power of justification give legitimacy to political objectives. Performance measures were used to provide transparency and make the conduct of MAGs visible to others. They helped justify the implementation of policies and programmes, and in the process provided legitimacy to the existence of MAGs themselves. Performance measures were deployed to make MAGs accountable for their activities and use of public money. However, there was resistance to the purposive actions of government because: the KPIs were generic and not discursively agreed with the MAGs; the MAGs were also funded from other source; and in some instances the KPIs hindered the MAGs to pursue their heterogeneous objectives.

It is argued that governmentality technologies should enable MAGs cope with the challenge of: simultaneously meeting multiple accountability objectives, shifting the focus from accounting to specific stakeholder group to accounting to multiple stakeholders, providing autonomy to MAGs, and enabling MAGs better manage conflicting accountability expectations. However, meeting these challenges has the potential to create new problems. For example, whilst MAGs may raise funding from non-government sources to enable them meet financial challenges and maintaining a satisfactorily level of service, reliance on income from non-government sources is highly risky because it is unstable and a substantial portion of the costs of MAGs are fixed. Moreover, initiatives to raise fund from non-government sources may



result in a clash between commercial ethos and cultural ethos. Profit making activities, such as increasing the number of paid exhibitions (whilst continuing to provide free general admission), and partnerships with corporate donors, may change the strategic directions of MAGs. For example, increasing the number of paid exhibits and commercial activities may attract more visitors from the elite class, which may defeat the government's policy objective of promoting social inclusion.

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